



WHAT MAKES US HAPPY?

Do you know someone that is just never happy with anything? A typical malcontent?

I do not mean people with physical, emotional or mental illnesses. I mean someone that is just never happy. They can never just accept things for what they are. It's never enough. If you are happy, that seems to make the situation worse.

In the last few years, psychologists and researchers have been digging up hard data on a question previously left to philosophers: **What makes us happy?**

Researchers like the father-son team Ed Diener and Robert Biswas-Diener, Stanford psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky, and ethicist Stephen Post have studied people all over the world to find out how things like money, attitude, culture, memory, health, altruism, and our day-to-day habits affect our well-being.

The emerging field of positive psychology is bursting with new findings that suggest your actions can have a significant effect on your happiness and satisfaction with life.

Here are 10 scientifically proven strategies for getting happy.

1/ Savor Everyday Moments

Pause now and then smell a rose or watch children at play. Study participants who took time to “savor” ordinary events that they normally hurried through, or to think back on pleasant moments from their day, “showed significant increases in happiness and reductions in depression,” says psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky.



2/ Avoid Comparisons

While keeping up with the Joneses is part of American culture, comparing ourselves with others can be damaging to happiness and self-esteem. Instead of comparing ourselves to others, focusing on our own personal achievement leads to greater satisfaction, according to Lyubomirsky.

3/ Put Money Low on the List

People who put money high on their priority list are more at risk for depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem, according to researchers Tim Kasser and Richard Ryan. Their findings hold true across nations and cultures. “The more we seek satisfactions in material goods, the less we find them there,” Ryan says. “The satisfaction has a short half-life—it’s very fleeting.” Money-seekers also score lower on tests of vitality and self-actualization.

4/ Have Meaningful Goals

“People who strive for something significant, whether it’s learning a new craft or raising moral children, are far happier than those who don’t have strong dreams or aspirations,” say Ed Diener and Robert Biswas-Diener. “As humans, we actually require a sense of meaning to thrive.” Harvard’s resident happiness professor, Tal Ben-Shahar, agrees, “Happiness lies at the intersection between

pleasure and meaning. Whether at work or at home, the goal is to engage in activities that are both personally significant and enjoyable.”

5/ Take Initiative at Work

How happy you are at work depends in part on how much initiative you take. Researcher Amy Wrzesniewski says that when we express creativity, help others, suggest improvements, or do additional tasks on the job, we make our work more rewarding and feel more in control.

6/ Make Friends, Treasure Family

Happier people tend to have good families, friends, and supportive relationships, say Diener and Biswas-Diener. But it’s not enough to be the life of the party if you’re surrounded by shallow acquaintances. “We don’t just need relationships, we need close ones” that involve understanding and caring.

7/ Smile Even When You Don’t Feel Like It

It sounds simple, but it works. “Happy people...see possibilities, opportunities, and success. When they think of the future, they are optimistic, and when they review the past, they tend to savor the high points,” say Diener and Biswas-Diener. Even if you weren’t born looking at the glass as half-full, with practice, a positive outlook can become a habit.



8/ Say Thank You Like You Mean It

People who keep gratitude journals on a weekly basis are healthier, more optimistic, and more likely to make progress toward achieving personal goals, according to author Robert Emmons. Research by

Martin Seligman, founder of positive psychology, revealed that people who write "gratitude letters" to someone who made a difference in their lives score higher on happiness, and lower on depression—and the effect lasts for weeks.

9/ Get Out and Exercise

A Duke University study shows that exercise may be just as effective as drugs in treating depression, without all the side effects and expense. Other research shows that in addition to health benefits, regular exercise offers a sense of accomplishment and opportunity for social interaction, releases feel-good endorphins, and boosts self-esteem.

10/ Give It Away, Give It Away Now!

Make altruism and giving part of your life, and be purposeful about it. Researcher Stephen Post says helping a neighbor, volunteering, or donating goods and services results in a "helper's high," and you get more health benefits than you would from exercise or quitting smoking. Listening to a friend, passing on your skills, celebrating others' successes, and forgiveness also contribute to happiness, he says. Researcher Elizabeth Dunn found that those who spend money on others reported much greater happiness than those who spend it on themselves.



Everyone has their own definition of happiness

Happiness is something that is important to anyone. Finding the true meaning of happiness will be quite difficult, because everyone has different perception for happiness. Some people cling on material things in order to find happiness while others find happiness on things that are beyond. It can be spiritual, or something that one cannot perceive, but just felt.

People's happiness levels change with age, an idea reflected in personal experiences and public opinion polls, but a new study shows that much of that change may boil down to how people define happiness itself.

Whereas happiness in younger people is often related to excitement, for older people, contentment was associated with a happy existence, the researchers found.

Gratitude

Happiness in life is linked to the comparisons we make. If you're always comparing what you have to the holdings of those who have more, you'll feel lacking; if you compare yourself to those less fortunate, you'll have a sense of abundance. Being grateful for what you have can definitely promote happiness, and it can also relieve stress. If you focus on how things could be better--how things should be better, you will likely have a much more intense experience of stress when facing challenges in your daily life. These challenges could be experienced as less stressful if you focused on how much more challenging they could be, comparing yourself to those who have it harder than you.

Cultivating Relationships

Happy people tend to have strong relationships and a sense of belonging to a group. Close friends and family can share in your joy and help you shoulder the burden of sorrow. They also help with stress relief, offering a supportive ear when you need one, or practical support when you need a helping hand. (They also offer the opportunity to return the favor, which is good for all of us.) Investing in close relationships with friends and family, and weeding out the 'toxic people', pays off in the long run.



And Several Other Things

Here's a list of several other factors that play into both happiness and stress relief. Each item on the list will lead you to a further explanation of how it relieves stress and promotes happiness, so you can skim the list as a whole, and decide how much you want to know about each item. Enjoy!

BAA, INT.